

several false and/or pseudo-scientific ideas about sex, race, gender, and evolution that currently fuel biases, prejudices, and social discriminations across society.

I know that a lot of truth and scientific *facts* are being suppressed across the country, and world for that matter, because schools and teachers are intimidated by the idea, or actual attacks from, some religious terrorist. Schools and teachers feel too threatened to expose the truth as much as they themselves are informed about it. Even as I write this, the scientific fact of evolution is under attack by people who falsely claim to have evidence of intelligent design, and, who claim that intelligent design is scientific. The fact of the matter is that the notion (and it is no more than a notion) of intelligent design is about as scientific as the Inquisition was holy.

Education and all educational systems should have one primary goal. That is, to inform and enlighten all students about the realities of the societies and world we live in. The intent being, that students become more willing and able participants in human, social progress and economic justice than those who came before them as students and members of society. Education, once again, is supposed to be about the best interest of society and humanity in general. Only in this way do we become better able to transcend the shadow of history, and thereby understand the nature of men and women who would deny us the truth, and propagate falsehoods, as a weapon against the oppressed and exploited.

I would advise anyone willing and able to attend college to do so for higher learning, but I would also say, "don't equate information and perfunctory learning with *education*." If we do not come out of the classroom with a constructive-humanistic worldview, rooted in genuine understanding and truth, then we are not truly educated. And, since the American school system is not designed to give us a constructive-humanistic, internationalist worldview, it does not truly educate us. We must therefore supplement and advise others to supplement. We must weave through propaganda, and wade through areas of science and fact that are not placed before us. In other ways, we must become perceptive enough to know when blanks need to be filled in. And above all, we must engage ourselves and *question* whenever we are urged to by intellect or intuition, or both. Understand that truth is not always static, but often dynamic and expansive. It can only grow on us and in us if we are searching for a deeper understanding and expression of it.

Rely on your self for the best education. The school system is part of the means to that end. Do not let it be the end in itself.

*"When the student is ready, the teacher will appear."*

~ A yogic saying

*"Whenever the educational process is accompanied by a dishonest suppression of facts and truths, relevant to the point at issue, it becomes pure propaganda. But even without such dishonest intentions there is, in all exchange of ideas, a certain degree of unconscious suppression of facts or inability to see all the facts. That is the very reason the educational process cannot be trusted to resolve a social controversy."*

~ Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society

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## Education Without A Lesson<sup>1</sup> Equals Educationless

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Before I enrolled in college, I was considerably self-educated, so I didn't expect to encounter a great deal of unfamiliar territory. For years, I had studied history, psychology, sociology, physical fitness, as well as taught myself passable English, and how to write. Well... as I have approached the end of my fourth semester, I am still waiting to be educated. I am still waiting to not be forced to study and memorize for test purposes, a bunch of pseudo-scientific theories that the average eighth grader would dismiss as "fishy-hogwash". What is the meaning and purpose of having students waste time and energy to read, take notes on, and memorize information that is proven false, and even absurd; information labelled as theory, yet, in reality is closer to the irrational concepts that arise from someone's grandiose illusions, and a search for glory that has taken a flight from everyday, obvious reality?

Last semester, I sat in a class of 21 students and asked the question, (relevant to a question from our textbook) "What is self-esteem?" Several tried, but no one could confidently answer the question. This semester, Spring 2005, and in a completely unrelated class, a teacher posed the question: "What is self-esteem?" Once again, here in a different class with different students, several tried, but none knew the actual definition of self-esteem! Two classes of college students didn't know the meaning of self-esteem. As in the previous semester, the first answer was: "It's how you feel about yourself." So, I asked, if I feel disgusted about myself, or hate myself, is that self-esteem?

In other classes, I have heard students comment that being in college helps them "build" their self-esteem. This, of course, is another revelation of how misunderstood the meanings of *education* and *self-esteem* are. To begin with, genuine education is not the repeated act of loading information into the short-term memory for a test, then forgetting eighty-percent of that information right after an exam, because you have to reload the short-term memory; for the most part, with information that has no value or personal importance to you. True education is essentially a discovery and *transcendence* process by which we, first and foremost, discover our basic humanity in common with others. It is a process that gives rise to social, psychological, and emotional transcendence, all of which allows us to humanistically rise above the biases and fetters of religion, ideology, so-called race, culture, and nationalism in relation to others. How is it possible for a racist, an ethnocentrist, a religionist, or nationalist, to call oneself educated? No. Such belief systems correspond with indoctrination, not education. With tradition – not progress.

I have observed a lot of propaganda being taught in classrooms. This doesn't necessarily accuse any teachers of being *knowing* propagandist; just that they teach what amounts to propaganda, because those who organize and fix the curriculums have an intent, unbeknownst to many teachers, to spread propaganda. That is the system! The information that students are exposed to must influence them toward the condonation or glorification of the status quo, and not toward political dissent. Propaganda is in opposition to education. When a student fixes his/her mind on a degree because of the advantage and opportunity it

<sup>1</sup> A thing learned

can offer in job status and earnings over the less-degreed masses, then the content of learning has little importance, and if the content of what is learned has little importance, what might we say about the *quality* of what is being conveyed to students?

What type of education system do you have when junior and senior college students actually cannot clearly and confidentially give the definition and meaning of self-esteem? That is like them not knowing they need to drink a certain minimum amount of plain water each day. If a person believes that he can build or achieve self-esteem through a college classroom, then, his understanding of what self-esteem is is terribly deficient. So deficient that it is practically null and void.

The truth is that "self-esteem is not something you achieve. It is something that you *acknowledge* with deep conviction." Self-esteem is the belief that you are innately worthy of being valued by yourself and others. That you are a human being worthy of acceptance, understanding, love, friendship, and respect. Self-esteem tells you that you deserve to succeed in life by accomplishing the goals and fulfilling the constructive desires that you have. It tells you that your worth and value are an end within themselves, and in no way dependent upon the idea of the greater or lesser value of others. It is called *self-esteem* because its essence rest within the self, and is not reliant upon anything you do or don't do. This leads us to the question of why self-esteem is so unacknowledged in a country like America? Well... it has a lot to do with capitalist culture and ideology. To begin with, capitalist ideology values property more than human life. We are considered to be only as valuable as the accumulated worth of our material possessions, or our earning power in comparison to that of others. The spirit of humanism plays hardly any role in how we perceive the value of other people. Society is plagued by what I call *pathological materialism*, i.e., the belief that life is a quest for material possessions; that human beings are a means to this end, and not an end within themselves to be accepted, loved, and valued.

If we do not come out of a two year or four year college experience with the idea of somehow improving the life of others, or making society better, then what is the purpose of that so-called education? What is the purpose of any learning if we do not learn the *truth* about the system and social, political, and economic forces that govern us? As far back as the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C, Greek philosophers asked the question: "What do we owe our government, and what do those who govern owe us?" How many in classrooms across America are asking today, "What *does* the government owe us?" A proposal to raise the minimum wage was recently voted down, yet ~~there~~ in congress who govern and pass laws have been receiving pay increases every year since 1988. Obviously these men, and few women, who are mostly millionaires don't feel that the government owes us a reasonable, secure living wage. In 1977 the minimum wage was two dollars and ninety cents (\$2.90), today it is five dollars and fifteen cents (\$5.15). Do the math. The minimum wage has not doubled in nearly thirty years. How many students are educated enough to see the pure corruption and wickedness in this scheme?

We, even today, often bear that 'we' have the best government in the world. This is one of US history's biggest myths. It is a myth based on the idea that the US government gives us this right, that freedom, etc. Get real! People throughout history in America had to suffer, die, struggle, and *force* government concessions to be able to exercise every right and privilege they/we have. None of those things were extended to society out of the compassion or humanity of those who govern. It is the government that has the least respect for the US Constitution, and does not want to come anywhere near attempting to

approximate the *ideals* in it. Too many of us have the illusion that the government is the constitution made flesh in the world. But, more and more, they fashion, amend, and interpret the Constitution as though it were a weapon to be used against the people. And it has been used as a dagger many times, despite many of the good ideals in it.

How many students come out of a four year college program having never read the Constitution? In fact, not even able to define words such as capitalism, socialism, and something as basic as self-esteem? What is education if its fundamental purpose is indoctrination and propaganda, as opposed to *humanization*? The problem is that the educational system can not humanize people and at the same time expect them to condone the existing political system and economic relations within society. Capitalism and humanism hardly jibe.

The Constitution offers us the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But the political-economic system denies the majority the ability to exercise these expressed rights. Farmers in America don't have the right to grow as much food as they want, then give it to the poor and hungry. Who among us has the right to be hired by an employer? Who has the *right* to food, clothing, and shelter? When you really examine things, you realize that the government is against us living within a society that *guarantees* the fulfillment of even *basic human necessities*, let alone addressing these necessities with enough justice and respect that they are *experienced as rights* instead of privileges. How is it, then, that the system survives with so much inequity? How do so many observe so much suffering in society and turn their heads away from it? It is possible because of pathological-individualism, i.e., the belief that "*I*" am all that matters, and as long as I can take care of "*my*" needs the world is okay. I first coined this term in, *A Call To Humanity*, and it seems quite clear that pathological-individualism and pathological-materialism go hand in hand, one giving rise to and/or reinforcing the other.

But the question still remains, what relationship should the educational system have with society in general? Should it be graduating disciples of indoctrination, propaganda, or pathological-individualism? Is the educational system serving the *best* interest of society? From my personal experience as a college student, I would have to say no. There are not enough questions asked and thoroughly answered about the type of socialization process we go through as citizens of the USA. The principle intent of any legitimate system of education must be to equip students with the intellectual, moral, and social exposures necessary for them to improve the overall human relations of society. No status quo should be condoned, or viewed as an end within itself, as long as pervasive inequities exist in society, i.e., inequities that can easily be corrected by a government using its potential to serve the people, instead of being served by them, which we have too much of in history; people serving the corrupt and unjust wants and needs of governments who ultimately have no more than the interest of themselves, corporations, and the ruling elite at heart.

My position is not that the current education system be trashed, but that it be allowed to evolve a greater depth, meaning, and purpose in its overall relationship to humanity. I enjoy the college experience and appreciate the good intent of teachers, but at the same time there is a need to look beyond the classroom, and, to perceive the sociological effects of it. There is a need for reform in much of the required curriculum. I question why physical anthropology, dealing with genes, chromosomes, and DNA, is not a basic requisite to acquire an associates degree? Information and knowledge of this subject would dismiss